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ABSTRACT

In this article the phenomenon of bullying is discussed, using a model for detecting and monitoring cases of bullying used by Japanese teachers. Bullying is viewed as symptomatic of a deeper problem, lack of respect for the dignity and integrity of others. Such respect is a central value in a culture of peace. Bullying is a major threat to tolerance in the schools and a moral challenge to educators. At the same time bullying cases also present an opportunity for teaching moral development, as well as personal and social responsibility. Sections include: "Behavioral Indicators of Intolerance," "Victim's Behaviour at School," "Social Circumstances of the Victim at School," "Physical Appearance and Home Behaviour of a Victim," and "'V' Presentation of School Bullying."

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RESPONDING TO A MAJOR PROBLEM OF ADOLESCENT INTOLERANCE: BULLYING

Betty A. Reardon

In international gatherings on human rights and peace education, the topic of bullying has frequently been addressed. In this article the phenomenon of bullying is discussed, using a model for detecting and monitoring cases of bullying offered by Japanese teachers. Bullying is viewed as symptomatic of a deeper problem, lack of respect for the dignity and integrity of others. Such respect is a central value of a culture of peace. Bullying is a major threat to tolerance in the schools and a moral challenge to educators. Yet at the same time bullying cases also present an opportunity for teaching toward moral development, as well as personal and social responsibility.

RESPONDING TO A MAJOR PROBLEM OF ADOLESCENT INTOLERANCE: BULLYING*

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Teachers mainly of adolescents (but not infrequently of younger children as well) in many countries report a similar problem of intolerance, bullying. The patterns of behaviour are also similar and viewed by most teachers as symptomatic of a deeper problem, lack of respect for the dignity and integrity of others. Indeed, this is the fundamental attitude which makes possible such major problems of intolerance as racism, sexism, ethnocentrism up to and including genocidal policies and acts. Thus respect for the dignity and integrity of persons is both a necessity for a tolerant society and the central value of convivial communities and a culture of peace.

We live in an emerging global culture which is competitive and violent. The lessons children learn from the society reinforce the belief in violence and force as the most effective means to achieve goals. Social violence is rampant and often random and has infected all areas of society including, in some countries, the schools. Publicly sanctioned violence remains a frequently employed instrument of the state. Intimidation and force are more widely practiced than persuasion and accommodation. Conflict is more evident than cooperation. Few of the characteristics of a culture of peace (see the Report on an Expert Group Meeting on Women's Contribution to a Culture of Peace, UNESCO, Paris, 1995) are in evidence in the global culture forming in the present society of nations, in which governmental use of force, threat of force, and demonstration of superior force, is often replicated by the citizenry in their daily social relations. When taken up by the young, such behavior, often referred to as bullying, is a highly destructive manifestation of intolerance that most vividly reflects a lack of comprehension and appreciation of human dignity. Thankfully, it is not yet the norm, but it is a growing concern among educators.

In international gatherings on human rights education and peace education, the theme of bullying has frequently been addressed. At one such annual gathering, the 1995 International Institute on Peace Education, Japanese teachers offered a very useful model for monitoring and detecting cases of bullying which left unattended can, as they often have, result in severe psychological and physical harm to the victim (even death or suicide in some instances), irreparable moral harm to the perpetrators, and a rejection of responsibility by the observers or bystanders. Bullying is a major threat to tolerance in the schools, an initiating factor in many cases of violence, and a moral challenge to educators. Yet at the same time bullying cases also present an opportunity for teaching toward moral development, as well as personal and social responsibility. Such educational goals are ever more urgent in the growing climate of intolerance, which led UNESCO on the occasion of the International Year of Tolerance, 1995, to prepare teaching materials intended to cultivate tolerance and respect for human rights. This article is adapted from one of three units intended to facilitate such education in teachers colleges and elementary and secondary schools. These units contain diagnostic tools to enable teachers to recognize intolerance and provide a conceptual basis for education to overcome it.

Among these tools are some suggested behavioural indicators intended to offer teachers some idea of what to look for in an assessment of intolerance. The following are suggestions for secondary schools, but they could be adapted also to other levels. Not all the following indicators will apply to all situations of intolerance. Circumstances vary from culture to culture and country to country, even classroom to classroom. In some cases, however, teachers may indeed find all symptoms present. Unfortunately, there are few teachers who will find none of these symptoms among their students. Intolerance, conflict, and violence are epidemic and pervasive.

Behavioural Indicators of Intolerance

Language: Do students call each other "names" or use racial or ethnic slurs or other denigrating terms in describing or addressing any members of the class? Are such terms written as graffiti near or in the school, books, etc.?

Stereotyping: Do students generalize about racial or ethnic groups, disabled, elderly or other persons different from themselves in negative terms? Do they tell "ethnic" jokes or draw or circulate stereotypical caricatures?

Teasing: Do students seek to embarrass others by calling attention to some personal characteristic, mistakes, or condition of their lives, families or friends? Do they do so consistently and frequently in the presence of other students who join in

or demonstrate amusement? Teasing may be the consequence of adolescent social awkwardness or of some specific form of intolerance. Teachers need to be sensitive to the source of teasing.

Prejudice: Do students assume that certain groups are less capable or worthy because of their racial or ethnic origins or personal characteristics? Do they consider people of some religions unsuitable companions or as holding "abnormal" beliefs? Racism, ethnocentrism, sexism, and homophobia can become more pronounced during adolescent struggles for identity.

Scapegoating: Do students tend to blame mishaps, misconduct, disputes, loss in sports or other competitions on one or a few particular classmates? When infractions of rules, discipline or disturbances of class order occur, is one or only a few of those involved "blamed" by other participants? When scapegoating is confronted as an issue, there are usually opportunities to use the incident to encourage reflection on personal and social responsibility – capacities essential to the practice of tolerance and democracy.

Discrimination: Do students shun some classmates, not choose them for partners or teammates or prevent them from participating in class, club or school activities on a regular basis? Does this behaviour appear to be based on gender, religion, ethnicity or race or on personal characteristics?

Ostracism: Do students go through periods in which one or a few others are not spoken to or included in their activities? Is this a pattern which occurs over long periods? Social ostracism is common among adolescents in some cultures. It is an experience that is very painful to the ostracized and very damaging to the capacities for tolerance of the ostracizers. It is one of the most difficult and sensitive situations for teachers to address. Great care and thought should be involved in any intervention. Ostracism is one situation in which it may be important for teachers to try to understand the "reasons" for as well as the causes of the ostracism. It can sometimes be a response to the violation of group values, some of which could be the values teachers seek to impart. Students need to be guided to think of alternative ways of dealing with the violation of values.

Harassment: Do some students consistently seek to make others uncomfortable by "squeezing" them out of line, leaving unpleasant anonymous notes or caricature drawings on their desks or in their books, or engaging in other behaviours that are intended to make the victim conform to or withdraw from the group? Does the harassment involve intimidation of the sort characteristic of bullying or behaviours of defacement?

Desecration or Defacement: Do some students write graffiti or deliberately spill

paint or in other ways show disrespect for and desire to damage the property of others? Do they ridicule the beliefs, clothing, customs or personal habits of other students? Have students engaged in such behaviour in the community in public places or places of worship?

Bullying: Do some students tend to deliberately intimidate some smaller or weaker students or use their social status to coerce others to do what the bully wants them to do? Do particular students goad or persuade others to join in the bullying?

Expulsion: Have some students been "thrown off" teams or out of clubs or working groups in an unfair or gratuitous manner? Have students been expelled from school on unfair bases? What reasons are offered for the expulsion? Do the reasons indicate disrespect for justice, personal dignity and integrity? Have students considered the consequence to the group as well as to the expelled?

Exclusion: Are some students consistently kept out of games, clubs, and out-of-school activities? Do the excluding students make it clear to the excluded and others that they are not worthy of inclusion? Are the victims perceived and treated as "outsiders", strangers or "others"? Does this happen with new students or cultural or racial minorities? Instances of exclusion provide opportunities for introducing the concept of the universality of human rights and the fundamental value of human dignity.

Segregation: Do students tend to congregate and socialize mainly in groups based on race, religion, ethnicity or gender or on other bases such as interests and neighborhood? Are there apparent leaders who encourage separation and antagonism? How does such separation affect the climate of the class and other relationships among the students?

Repression: Are some students forcefully or by other forms of intimidation discouraged or prevented by a classmate or group of classmates from participating in class discussions or "speaking their minds" in social interactions with their peers? Are their opinions denigrated or ridiculed?

Destruction: Have some students been attacked or physically harmed by other students? Are physical fights frequent? Do fights tend to be between particular individuals or groups that students identify with, including their clubs, associations or "gangs"? Consideration of the consequences of violence and introduction to potential and actual alternatives to violence should be included in responses to this form of intolerance.

It is advisable to make a general assessment of possible intolerance in the first days of meeting with a new class. However, teachers should be alert to the manifestation of these symptoms at all times. Responses must be sensitive and

instructional. It is not useful to blame the perpetrator in the presence of the class or lavish sympathy on the victim. It is recommended that the response begin with teaching units related to the forms of intolerance that are present, so that students can become aware of them in a non-threatening way. When dealing with the actual symptoms in a particular class, teachers are cautioned to focus on the behaviour and its consequences, rather than on perpetrators and victims. The focus should be first on the problem, then on the relationship, not on the persons until there is sufficient understanding to enable students to take responsibility for their actions.

The students directly involved and their classmates should reflect on the actual and the potential consequences, and assess the effects these consequences can have to the class. Then the students could be asked to develop appropriate responses. What should others in the class do when they observe such behaviour? What kinds of actions would help to change the situation, provide a fair solution and contribute toward a more tolerant climate in the class? The perpetrators and victims should be helped to acknowledge responsibility and develop a better relationship. Exercises in conflict resolution and reconciliation could help facilitate this process. It is important to emphasize that such exercises should focus on the development and maintenance of positive relationships based on mutual respect and appreciation of human dignity. These kinds of learnings offer a constructive response to instances of bullying. Such instances can be identified by the following symptoms or "hidden pleas" for help on the part of a bullying victim presented at the International Institute on Peace Education by Ms. Hiroko Sugimura of Denenchofu Futaba High School in Tokyo. Her long experience and discussions with other teachers led her to identify the victim behaviours and surrounding conditions that should alert teachers to a possible case of bullying.

Victim's Behaviour at School:

- o remains by himself or herself much of the time;
- o appears to be unable to join in the play of classmates;
- o is often tearful, usually in private;
- o often and with growing frequency forgets to bring school things from home;
- o demonstrates less desire to study;
- o he/she carries an "unnecessarily" large amount of money;
- o frequently is late for classes;
- o pays frequent visits to sick room or school nurse;
- o becomes reluctant to go to school;
- o behaves in the same manner with all members of the bullying group.

Social Circumstances of the Victim at School:

- o appears to be "surrounded" by a group (usually the bullying group);
- o is ignored by all or most class members;
- o is constantly ridiculed and made light of;
- o is derided when he/she speaks in class;
- o sees insulting words about him/her written on the blackboard and/or walls;
- o is separated spacially with his/her desk on the "margins" of the classroom;
- o desk and chair show signs of abuse by carvings and other defacements;
- o his/her pin-ups are damaged or torn down;
- o is forced to carry other students' books and/or school bags, to "run errands" for others, and give money or property to the bully(ies);
- o is physically attacked.

Physical Appearance and Home Behaviour of a Victim:

- o clothing may be torn, buttons and pockets missing, and may show signs of a shoe print;
- o belongings are frequently missing; his/her school bag is in bad condition, words written or drawings on his/her textbooks;
- o takes money and valuable from home;
- o body shows signs of bruises, face is pale, eyes are swollen indicating lack of sleep;
- o frequently claims pain or illness in the morning to avoid school;
- o cries out in sleep;
- o expression is usually gloomy, sometimes "vacant" eyes; avoids eye contact and sometimes feigns gaiety.

All or any of these indicators should be taken seriously by teachers who will usually need the cooperation of parents to help the victim and educate the perpetrators to the seriousness and consequences of their acts. As can be seen, "bullying" as described here manifests various of the symptoms of intolerance listed earlier. Once the situation is faced, the teacher could introduce the symptoms as the basis for lessons on the practice of tolerance and respect for others.

Intervention, while difficult and requiring sensitivity, is necessary, not only for the sake of the student being victimized, but equally for the sake of the bullying students, and especially for the good of the entire class. Teachers can no more guide students toward the development of convivial communities when there is moral exclusion (i.e., consistent, rationalized discriminatory and unjust treatment) in their classrooms or schools than political leaders can guide their peoples and nations to peace in the presence of the marginalization and injustice in world

society. Both situations call for action, to relieve the suffering and set those involved on a path to reconciliation and peace.

If students are educated in an environment which ignores or condones by silence or even, as in some instances, subtle, sometimes overt approval on the part of those most responsible for the moral climate of the environment, they are not likely to develop the sense of justice and moral responsibility so essential to action to overcome the injustices and marginalization in our local communities, national and world societies. Bullying adolescents may well grow into adults who foster intolerance and injustice in their communities.

Staff support groups, working together to assure that teachers have the capacities to teach and act for tolerance in the schools, can be the most important agent of response in serious cases of bullying. In such cases, the individual teachers concerned will need the counsel and support of colleagues in determining an appropriate course of action to be taken on behalf of the school. Many schools now hold regular sessions to deal with such issues before they become serious problems. For such schools and for all concerned teachers, Ms. Sugimura offers these suggestions for

Prevention of School Bullying:

- o Be alert so that bullying can be detected as early as possible.
- o Consult with colleagues to determine a range of responses and apply the ones that promise to be most effective as soon as possible.
- o Work to develop warm and supportive human relationships among students and teachers.
- o Emphasize the values of human dignity and diversity and teach about human rights.
- o Promote consciousness of the nature and consequences of violence and intimidation.
- o Generate an awareness of and an appreciation for the concepts and skills of nonviolence.
- o Teach problem-solving and conflict resolution skills.
- o Strengthen ties between teachers and parents and between school and community. Remember bullying is not an individual problem; it is a community challenge.

When the teaching staff has discovered and discussed an incident or chronic case of bullying, parents should be asked to enter the discussion. Their support will strengthen the school action, and they will appreciate the sensitivity and help of the school staff in relation to how the situation affects the home and family. However,

if the family prefers their own handling of the matter to remain private, their privacy, of course, must be respected. But the school still has responsibility for the moral and physical well-being of students when they are in the care of the school.

Bullying may or may not be the consequence of general prejudices based on ethnicity, religion, physical differences and other characteristics which distinguish one or a minority of students from others in a class or school. Nonetheless, in all cases, it is clearly a manifestation of moral exclusion that may be inflicted because of some personal characteristic of the victim or simply randomly to fulfill a desire to control and/or intimidate that often seems to motivate the bully.

Bullying while sometimes the actions of one individual, and usually at the instigation of the "leader" of the bullying group, is a community problem, a social issue. Often its causes can be traced to such factors as the condoning of intimidation and violence in the larger society, to the general atmosphere of a school or community. In all cases, however, it is possible only because the social group, the class, the town, the nation permits it. The existence of bullying is evidence of failure to accept and exercise social responsibility. Students need to be helped to understand bullying as a social issue and to see how it can be part of a larger pattern or cycle of intolerance, injustice, and violence.

Ms. Sugimura also observes a pattern of relationship to the bullying that demonstrates positions or stances from which students can become aware of opportunities to make moral decisions. She presents the pattern as a set of circles in which the bullying group or individual bully and victim are at the very center. Around this center there are three outer circles. At the first circle are the students who view the incident as a spectacle, often with amusement, which in turn encourages the bullies and leaves the victim in a more isolated situation. At the second outer circle are the students who observe and may even sympathize with the victim, but prefer not to "get involved". At the outermost circle are teachers and parents who may or may not be aware of the situation before observing and interpreting the previously described indicators of bullying.

The outermost circle, those at the greatest distance, are generally those with the most authority, power and responsibility in the entire pattern of relationships. In school bullying cases, teachers' and parents' roles can be seen as similar to that of public authority at various levels who, when they become aware of a situation of intolerance and injustice that violates human rights, may or may not exercise their responsibility to intervene to end the situation and prevent recurrences. In some cases, governmental agencies may need cooperation of other agents as teachers need that of parents. These parallels and the imperative of responsibility should be described when teachers introduce discussion of bullying or any forms or situations

of intolerance where there are bystanders and observers.

As part of a program to prevent bullying, study of such situations in the form of actual social injustices and human rights violations could be introduced. Historic case studies, literature and films are very useful instructional tools to demonstrate how persons have grown in moral responsibility from callous or unawakened spectators or even from perpetrators or accomplices to acting in solidarity with the victims. Teachers of English or those using English as a medium of instruction could, for example, use such films as *Schindler's List* or *A Dry White Season* or *Romero* among many others for this purpose. (A model lesson for ages 15-18 using the latter film appears in *Educating for Human Dignity: Learning about Rights and Responsibilities*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1995.)

The teachers can point out that although the power to act in such situations sometimes appears to reside in recognized authority, the reality is that all involved in the relationship have power and responsibility. This concept is the fundamental idea of democracy, that all citizens have power and responsibility to act for the benefit of the society. The same principle operates in democratic schools and classrooms (teachers will find *A Sense of Belonging*, a UNESCO/CIDREE publication, Paris, 1993, ISBN 1 85955 090 8, very helpful in illuminating this point). Although there are various degrees of proximity, all who are aware of a situation have an opportunity to exercise moral responsibility. Anyone can take action to try to stop and prevent intolerance and other human rights violations. Here, it is helpful to outline some of the stages of development of moral responsibility in such situations. A simplified version of the stages would be as follows:

AWARENESS	Spectator:	one who watches with no sense of the meaning.
	Observer:	one who actually understands what is happening as an injustice.
ADVOCACY	Witness:	one who speaks about the situation to others.
	Advocate:	one who speaks consistently and publicly on behalf of the victim, usually to those in other circles, especially authorities.
ACTION	Activist:	one who takes action on behalf of the victim.
	Solidarity:	standing with the victim confronting the perpetrator.

The teacher can also point out how persons such as Oskar Schindler who spent all his wealth to save Jews from the Holocaust, and Oscar Romero, an archbishop who was assassinated because he demanded an end to repression in El Salvador, developed through these stages; at first not facing the realities of the human rights violations and ultimately risking all to be in solidarity with the victims. They can explain that the crucial stage is that of advocacy. If more people spoke out and called for justice, these situations would be less likely to become so severe. Democracy only works when citizens exercise responsibility. Ask what might have happened if *all* those who knew of the actions leading to the Holocaust had spoken out? What if all the Christians who heard Romero's message had heeded it? Point out the heroism and courage of the individuals and the few who speak out or act against injustices.

It is also important to note the difference between an "informer" or "tattle-tale" who betrays others to authority for selfish motives and a "witness" who seeks to end an injustice or prevent intolerance. Morality rests in large part on intention, but it requires reflection, that is truly critical thinking and action, exercising responsibility. The development of these capacities is most effective in the face of actual experience. Schools have the responsibility to work toward such development. Thus bullying, while a major problem, can also be a special opportunity to provide this essential moral education. While a problem of intolerance, occasions of bullying provide "teachable moments" for learnings toward tolerance and justice, key values to be pursued during the International Decade of Human Rights Education.

*This article is adapted from *Tolerance: The Threshold of Peace: Curriculum Supplement for Secondary Schools*, Unit 3 of a Three-Unit Series, UNESCO, 1996.

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